

**Dennis McDonald, Ed.D.**  
Principal  
Demarest Middle School  
568 Piermont Road, Demarest, NJ 07627  
**Category:** Middle Level Principal – Northern Region

---

Dennis McDonald has worked in the Demarest School District for over 27 years and has been the principal of Demarest Middle School since 1977. The school is recognized as a model middle school and over 50 Bergen County school districts have arranged for teams to visit and observe such programs as team teaching, interdisciplinary teaching, collaborative teaching and the introduction of multiple intelligences and differentiated instruction in grades 5-8. Besides a variety of exploratory programs that supplement and enrich the curriculum, students are also exposed to Quality Circle problem solving/system thinking approaches and workplace competencies introduced through a community career awareness program. “As a school principal, I have implemented programs that place strong emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, cooperative learning, self-learning and character-citizenship education,” says McDonald. “Every effort is made to create and maintain a positive school climate that is supportive of excellence in teaching and student learning.”

Viewed as a “lighthouse school district” by state/county and local professional associations and other regional/county districts, Demarest Middle School continues to offer staff members the opportunity to share in school decision making. Staff input is continually sought for program improvement and McDonald has instituted several committees for staff to offer suggestions. Parents are also an important element to Demarest Middle School’s success. McDonald was instrumental in arranging for an Internet Safety Program, and Bullying Prevention and Reducing Stress in Children workshops to be presented to parents at PTA meetings. He also coordinated the D.A.R.E. program and serves as a member of the district’s Crisis Management Team, Literacy Committee, Technology Committee and Professional Development Committee. McDonald makes sure that the school maintains close ties with civic groups and several projects have been coordinated with companies in the area. Programs such as Celebrity Readers and Health Awareness Day feature local and famous guest speakers.

A graduate of Jersey City State College, McDonald earned master’s degrees from Jersey City State College, Montclair State University and Teacher’s College, Columbia University. He earned his doctorate from Teacher’s College, Columbia University. McDonald is a member of NJPSA, ASCD, NASSP and the Bergen County Elementary and Middle School Principals and Supervisors Association. In 1993, he was selected as the Bergen County Middle School Principal of the Year and in 1994 earned an NJPSA Middle School Principal of the Year award. He began his career as a teacher in Ridgefield Park before starting his lifelong relationship with Demarest Middle School in 1965.

“Under his steadfast leadership, Demarest Middle School students consistently achieve outstanding levels of excellence as measured by local, state and national achievement tests,” said Superintendent of Schools Lawrence Hughes. “Working closely with students, parents, school board members and community leaders, Dr. McDonald is directly responsible for developing, implementing and effectively supervising numerous effective and innovative programs to meet the changing needs of our students.”